

**PUBLIC MEETINGS ON  
DRAFT TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN**

**VOLUME I – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (STATEWIDE)  
MAJOR FINDINGS (COUNTIES)**

Presented to the:  
**Hawaii Tourism Authority**

Submitted by:  
**Market Trends Pacific, Inc.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hawaii Tourism Authority prepared Ke Kumu, the draft of the Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP), in June 1999. This draft was based on two “foundation” efforts: a competitive analysis describing the trends and competition Hawaii faces throughout the world, and a product assessment describing both the reality and perception of the kinds of events, attractions and experiences that Hawaii provides visitors. The initiatives that generated the strongest responses statewide are outlined in the following paragraphs.

**Communication and Community Relations:** This was the most consistent theme throughout all the public meetings, from the first meeting to the last. Having more avenues for direct public input was important to everyone, whether the individual testimonies were supportive or opposed to the draft of the strategic plan. The vast majority of those who participated were eager to see regular, ongoing public meetings with the Authority. One of the most frequently repeated suggestions was to engage more focus groups in the future, particularly those representing Native Hawaiian and environmental organizations. Alongside these suggestions were questions regarding: how public input was being collected, how the information would be used, how the information would be applied in practice.

The Board addressed some of the concerns by not interrupting public testimony, reviewing highlights of the comments that were heard in each meeting and emphasizing that the draft is a work in progress. The Board further explained in subsequent meetings that the function of the public meetings are not to force public acceptance for the draft TSP, but rather to collect and integrate public input into the plan. One often-repeated concern was how the HTA would use the input collected.

**Product Development:** Concerns in this area involved sensitivity to the environment, the treatment and portrayal of the Hawaiian culture. Participants called for accountability measures (defining each island's carrying capacity, consulting cultural advisory groups before approving projects) and more education for both visitors and residents to protect and preserve both the environment and its host culture.

The Hawaiian community was generally skeptical about the use of Hawaiian words and cultural concepts in the draft TSP. A number of participants questioned the authenticity of the Board's information about the Hawaiian concepts they were "selling" in the plan. Emphasizing community-based, cultural interpretation and visitor education on the proper protocol for approaching sacred sites (such as heiau) was one of the more popular suggestions statewide. Another concern was not having a voting member of Hawaiian ancestry on the Board.

**Regulations and Investment Incentives:** Strong reactions against references to "changing land use laws" were prevalent throughout all public meetings. The perception was that this meant bulldozing natural habitat in favor of Waikiki-style development. At worst, the HTA was accused of using niche tourism as a "smokescreen" to allow hotels on conservation and ag lands.

The Board addressed this concern by citing specific examples of such changes, e.g. legalizing bed and breakfasts, allowing visitor overnight stays at ranches. Many also called for educating visitors on the impact of their activities on the fragile ecosystem, e.g. environmental damage from walking on the reefs. Just as the draft TSP attempts to have measurable goals for marketing, several suggested that the HTA set up goals for measuring the carrying capacity of each island when considering tourism products.

**Marketing:** The majority of those who testified expressed the uniqueness of their particular island, and wanted that to be expressed more strongly in the draft TSP. Several took exception to the phrase "Hawaii brand," fearing that their particular area would be lost in a massive, overall marketing effort. On every island, residents implored the board to build on the existing strengths of each particular area, and supporting community-based businesses instead of attempting to build a homogeneous brand.

**Lack of Emphasis on the Human element:** This was perceived to be the greatest gap in the draft TSP. Over and over again, the public said that what makes Hawaii special is its people. Participants' statewide advocated measures that would give residents greater appreciation of Hawaii's history, culture, environment and how they themselves make Hawaii special. Suggestions

included educating everyone from residents to managers to employees about Hawaii's host culture as well as its multiculturalism, in addition to the economic benefits of tourism.

The Board addressed these concerns in part by explaining that payroll and taxes comprise the majority of hotel expenses, both of which remain in the state. In addition, hotels work with hundreds of suppliers, from small business retailers to local farmers. The Board also acknowledged that the visitor industry has not done a good job of educating the community on the economic benefits of tourism. There was widespread agreement that businesses must have the conscience to manage employees and community relationships as assets.

## BACKGROUND AND METHOD

On July 13, 1999, the Hawaii Tourism Authority Board unveiled the first draft of the Tourism Strategic Plan at a public meeting at the Hawaii Convention Center. This event launched a three-week statewide effort to solicit public input on the draft Tourism Strategic Plan. Market Trends Pacific, Inc. was contracted by the HTA to document the proceedings at all 10 meetings statewide. Transcripts were reconstructed from audiocassette recordings of each meeting. *Due to technical limitations of the recording equipment, transcripts were also supplemented with written notes from the proceedings whenever possible.*

Meetings were held as follows:

1. July 13	East Oahu	Hawaii Convention Center
2. July 14	West Maui	Sheraton Maui
3. July 15	East Maui	Maui Community College
4. July 20	Windward Oahu	Windward Community College
5. July 21	Kauai	Lihue Civic Center
6. July 23	Molokai	Kaunakakai Elementary School
7. July 26	Lanai	Lanai High and Elementary School
8. July 27	Leeward Oahu	Leeward Community College
9. July 28	Kailua-Kona	Aston Keahou Beach Resort
10. July 29	Hilo	UH-Hilo

The following report consists of synopses of the findings from each county and summaries of the comments from each meeting, classified under particular strategic initiatives in the draft Tourism Strategic Plan. Given the wide range of concerns of all the participants, and the necessity of addressing specific initiatives, subjective judgments were made regarding in which initiative the comments should be placed.

In the summary sections, quotes were edited for brevity and clarity. Verbatim comments are included in the transcript.

## COUNTY SYNOPSIS: OAHU

Three meetings were held on this island --- at the Hawaii Convention Center, Windward Community College and Leeward Community College. This island generated some of the most highly charged public meetings in the state. Overall, public and written comments were largely supportive of the draft TSP as “a new beginning.” However, there was general distrust of government entities. Many expressed frustration at not being included in the drafting process. The draft TSP was seen as a good document for marketing but not for communicating with the public.

### EAST OAHU

**Communication and Community Relations:** The majority of comments in this area dealt with requests that the HTA be more inclusive in its decision-making. According to one comment, the draft TSP’s use of “marketing jargon” and “visitor industry-speak” was perceived as “obtrusive to businesses and industries not typically regarded in the traditional (past) industry fold.” Specifically, much of the testimony was concerned that “the Board appears too homogeneous,” with no voting representation from the Hawaiian people nor environmental protection groups. Participants called on the HTA to spend the “time, effort, patience and understanding” to build trust within the community.

### *Selected Comments*

*Please make inclusiveness your goal, especially some with contrary views. This will strengthen the process and the results for all of us.*

*Richard Morris, President-Hawaii Operations, Benefit Capital Financial Services Inc.*

*Before you forge a new beginning for tourism, there must be a definite concerted effort by the HTA and the industry to build trust in the community ... I suggest you look at the Mayor’s plans from visioning sessions. It was so clear and so focused on what we really want Hawaii to be, and I think it would really assist you in figuring out how to make that nexus.*

*Kat Brady, Asst. Exec. Director, Life of the Land*



*When the HTA says that this process is 'as open as any government process could ever be' that makes me extremely nervous.*

*Oahu Resident*

*It has been difficult to have a coalition of community groups to review, receive calls from you, to be in touch with you. I strongly urge that you recruit people like us, the small people in the visitor industry, community leaders and other people like that because you need to hear from us day after day, week after week and not just on special occasions.*

*Laurie Dillon, Hawaiian Environmental Coalition*

*Ke Kumu means the source. And the source is Hawaii. And the Hawaiian people are the source. And that is what you market. That's what you sell through tourism ... And there's nobody in there that advocates for the Hawaiian people, the Hawaiian culture or the land at all.*

*Vicky HoltTakamine, 'Ilio'ulaokalani Coalition*

**Product Development:** Overall, the majority of those who testified agreed that Hawaii needs to move away from the models of mass tourism that the State has relied upon in the past. A number of participants were concerned that the Board was considering increasing visitor arrivals without assessing the carrying capacity of each island. Many advocated greater emphasis on the protection of natural resources. One suggestion was to match each marketing dollar with another dollar in environmental protection and community-based or community-enhancing projects.

Some participants mentioned several opportunities in this area: one mentioned millions in matching federal funds that Hawaii has missed because of limitations in the state Department of Land and Natural Resources' budget, while Dr. Fredrick Collison, interim dean of the University of Hawaii Manoa Travel Industry Management School, mentioned a recent \$500,000 contribution made to the school to develop sustainable, environmentally sensitive tourism. The Board also received a proposal for a marine lab/visitor facility on the Leeward coast.

Several participants urged the Board to consider supporting more of the existing, culturally authentic, small-scale, community-based tourism products. Some were encouraged by the absence of gambling as an initiative, while one advocated tighter restrictions on the adult-oriented establishments near the Convention Center.

### ***Selected comments***

*"This appears to be a tourism-centered growth paradigm ... the plan talks about a vast underutilized richness while local people that we know feel vastly overused, underappreciated, and disrespected ... the plan notes that local people clearly want to control growth. And yet it continues to talk about expanding tourism facilities and creating new ones to bring 20% more visitors in the next couple of years.*

*Charlie Ice, Community Revitalization Coalition*

*I think we all agree the economy's in trouble, (partly because) we are involved in a system of mass tourism ... I think we need to assess some very clear, measurable goals for talking about economic diversification that reaches the local community and small, locally owned businesses directly ... We only spend 6.6 % on product development ... I would suggest you set a goal of 10% product development."*

*Ira Rohter, Community Revitalization Coalition*

*"We urge the HTA not to fund new tourism product and events at the expense of high-quality, authentic products which already exist. Let us invest in and make our many fine, community-based cultural and historical assets to tell our story and invite visitors to experience "the real Hawaii."*

*Deborah Pope, Hawaii Museums Association*

*We are concerned with the carrying capacity of the islands. The limit of human capacity on Hawaii must be acknowledged and resesarched. Resources should be inventoried. The Sierra Club would like to work with you in the future and partner, serve as a consultant on some of these issues.*

*Jeff Mikulina, Sierra Club*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** In connection with concerns about the preservation of natural resources, several participants opposed changes in land use laws that would diminish natural resources in favor of investments in large-scale development or hotels on conservation or agricultural lands. Among the environmental protection community, several pointed out that “Hawaii’s land use laws are hailed around the country as a model of an exemplary state plan” and called for examples of developments that were unreasonably restricted without legitimate Native Hawaiian or resource protection concerns. Among the Hawaiian community, there was concern that changes in regulations would infringe upon culturally significant areas.

### ***Selected comments***

*We are very concerned about changing land use laws... I don't want to see Mauna Kea like Haleakala with tour buses and bike tours that run up and down. Those areas are so special to us in Hawaii ... Mauna Kea is the most sacred for us. We are not here to sell everything. None of you have looked into that or have any value for that. We need to protect those spaces. Yes, tourism is an important industry here. But it has to be managed. And it is your job to manage it.*

*Vicky Holt Takamine*

*When I read this, it looks like business as usual. It looks like big money interests trying to manipulate and circumvent the very laws, which protect our unique environment for future generations solely in the interest of money. Our natural and cultural resources are the drawing cards for tourism. And yet we have never seen the industry ante up to protect the environment.*

*Kat Brady, Life of the Land:*

*We're concerned that this vision considers every part of our island as fair game for development, placing priority on the visitor experience and leaving locals out of it, except for maybe more service jobs.*

*Charlie Ice, Community Revitalization Coalition:*

*We would oppose any effort to weaken our land use laws. Or the Land Use Commission ... we oppose any effort to build a resort on public beaches which would limit public access to those beaches. We've seen this over and over.*

*Bill Seger, Conservation Council for Hawaii:*

*There are 65 legal bed and breakfast operations on the island of Oahu ... they all pay their TAT, they all pay the GET and so forth. But they stand one step away from losing their homes simply because what they are doing is illegal. Would you be willing to work with us to change the law to make sure that bed and breakfast accommodations, inns, dude ranches, and other kinds of farming accommodations can be legal in the State of Hawaii?*

*Shannon Wood, Hawaii Ecotourism Association*

**Marketing:** Several participants were apprehensive about the goal of increasing visitor stays and expenditures. Many interpreted this to mean that the plan would focus only on the high-end market and neglect budget travelers. Some had negative reactions to the notion of a "Hawaii brand" that would neglect the uniqueness of each island destination. A number of participants also pointed out the benefits of marketing to Hawaii's residents. Organizations specializing in Asia and Europe urged the HTA to look more closely at those markets and offered their expertise in marketing to those areas. The gay and lesbian market was seen as a niche market that was absent from the strategic plan.

### ***Selected Comments***

*The emphasis on increasing visitor expenditures makes sense. However, it would be uncomfortable to focus on just the high-end and elite markets. We must not lose sight of our "bread and butter" foundation ... Marketing to residents of our state was not obvious. Attracting more of our local citizens can only enhance your results.*

*Richard Morris, Benefit Capital Financial Services, Inc.*

*Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and China comprise the third highest visitor arrival for Hawaii. Outbound travel is increasing but Hawaii's share is decreasing. HCTA offers guidance for this emerging market. We want to sit down with HTA to formulate business plan. 'If we want to be the bridge between East and West we must find ways to overcome some of the problems.'*

*Carol Tsai, president, Hawaii Chinese Tourism Association:*

*Hawaii has virtually zero visibility in places like France ... When you talk to French people about Hawaii, a third of them will think you're talking about Haiti. The other third will think you're talking about Tahiti. And you can sometimes get a glimmer of recognition if you say, it used to be known as the Sandwich Islands .... Get to people with materials in their own languages ... we make the effort for Japan, why not for French and Italian and German speakers? Scandinavia is left out, the Netherlands are left out. These are rich countries.*

*Martin Brown*

*San Francisco is known for its large gay community, which certainly does not negatively affect its tourism industry ... Diversity in people makes for an interesting destination. Diversity in people is what Hawaii is best known for. Hawaii is known for its tolerance, its spirit of aloha. This is the time to pursue this very important and lucrative market.*

*Jack Law, businessman, commissioner with the Hawaiian Civil Rights Commission:*

**Events:** Representatives of the Aloha Racing Marketing Team gave updates regarding their campaign to have a Hawaiian boat compete in the America's Cup race, and solicited support from the HTA. Joseph McAlister of the Hawaii International Choral Festival and Oahu Choral Society talked about a recently concluded event that attracted representatives worldwide. To illustrate the economic impact of cultural events, he also shared how one of his friends recently spent more than \$2,000 to attend shows on the mainland.

**Airlift:** One participant, Martin Brown, advocated one-stop service from major European gateways to Honolulu.

**Infrastructure and Support Services:** The Sierra Club noted that HTA's budget is responsible for the reduced amount of money available for the counties to maintain parks and upgrade the infrastructure of parks and beaches.

## LEEWARD OAHU

This audience had strong feelings about representation on the HTA Board, particularly the lack of representation from the Native Hawaiian and environmental protection community. Overall this group of participants expressed great skepticism about the Board's intentions to remain open to community input. Airlift was not discussed.

**Communication and Community Relations:** The majority of participants criticized the lack of Hawaiian voting representation of the Board, urging current members to push the Legislature for change. The lack of Hawaiian representation was seen as a sign that the HTA was "indifferent" to the Hawaiian community, despite the use of Hawaiian words and values. One participant questioned the authenticity of the plan's "spin" on Hawaiian culture. Another participant advocated having the members of the Board elected instead of appointed. Alienation was expressed by not only Hawaiian and environmental representatives but also small business owners, represented by the Hawaii Food Manufacturers' Association. There was one comment about the document being a good marketing tool, but not particularly effective in soliciting public input.

*(In using the term 'local' in reference to the culture of the state of Hawaii) if your intent is to describe Hawaii's multicultural, multiethnic culture, the plan should so state, and all Hawaiian words and phrases be removed from the plan. If the term describes the host or indigenous culture, then either of these two words should be used ... the Office of Hawaiian Affairs is troubled that the Hawaii Tourism Authority continues to develop its plans and programs without including the Hawaiian people in the process ... (and does not understand how) our philosophy and beliefs can be included without benefit of the insight of those whose culture is being interpreted or translated ... We urge the Hawaii Tourism Authority to begin including Hawaiian people as a continuous process to redefine the strategic plan."*

*Pikake Pelekai, Office of Hawaiian Affairs*

*We don't know you. And you probably don't get a lot of answers about the Hawaiian community because you probably don't know us. And it seems obviously that what has to happen is we've got to get to know each other. And that's not going to happen in this kind of forum.*

*Kalani Akana, President. Halau Aloha, National Academy of Hawaiian Performing Arts*

*For HTA to tout Hawaiian values such as lokahi ... doesn't ring true when during the boom years the community has been blocked out of the tourism discussion. Now that tourism is hurting, you're coming to us as if we've always been included in your plans. Please know that this is hypocritical to us. If you want to market the Hawaiian culture as your plan suggests you must follow the proper protocols and ask the Hawaiian people what their vision is. You don't toss out Hawaiian words which have a deep and spiritual meaning lightly just to get buy-in into your plan ... you must do your share to protect Hawaii.*

*Kat Brady, Life of the Land*

*I was looking for HVCB to be a partner, but I was told that I have to go to some kind of public relations agency. They don't talk to you. ... They don't realize we're their customers.*

*Chari Watanabe, Hawaii Food Manufacturers Association*

*You mention that this is a community forum, but there wasn't really much notice in the papers and people in the community like me, we're looking to see people like 'Olelo here to document this. And it seems like you people are afraid to have the community see what you do. It seems like the Hawaiians are begging you for one Native person on your Board, and it is degrading ... How do we know this is a new beginning? ... How do we know we're not going to repeat the same mistakes? ... Be more open, have more people know what you're doing ... And let's have a real new beginning. Not just the same old stuff. We want results.*

*Dave Gonzales*

*A lack of televised proceedings is a major failing. 'Olelo broadcasts or videotapes neighborhood board meetings. It's difficult to many people in the community to think that personal with the resources you have would simply forget to do that.*

*Mark Viglielmo*

**Product Development:** Peter Apo, Director of the Native Hawaiian Tourism and Hospitality Association, urged the board to adopt true ho'okipa. Instead of traditional tourism models that place the needs of the guest above the place and its host, ho'okipa honors the place first, which in turn benefits both its residents and guests. Van Horn Diamond noted that Hawaii has one of the largest groups of performing artists per capita, often descended from generations of performers, people who have performed around the world. But in Hawaii they are under-appreciated and passed over for those who perform for free.

Chari Watanabe of the Hawaiian Food Manufacturers Association urged the HTA to extend matching funds for those who bring Hawaii products to out-of-state trade shows, not just in-state events. Her 250-member organization had recently gone to a trade show in Las Vegas, which generated lucrative contracts for several participants. She also encouraged the HTA to establish a generic website for Hawaii that small businesses could feature on their own business cards in addition to their own individual websites: "Consider the sale of Hawaii's goods and services as a tourism byproduct. Even though they leave Hawaii, we can still sell to them. Tourism need not be a body coming to Hawaii and leaving and never coming back again."

Ray Tabata of the University of Hawaii Sea Grant Program talked about developing a "thematic itinerary," having community-based cultural interpretation as well as interpretive signs at scenic lookouts linking each feature to each island's unique personality and history.

### ***Selected Comments***

*The traditional tourism begins to sacrifice the place and the host community in order to accommodate the visitor. Local culture becomes displaced. In the long run this model tends to degrade the dignity of the host community, spawns hostility and seriously compromises the integrity of the place and its institutions. The*



*feeling of place is generated from a combination of things which includes the emotional state of the people who live there, their culture, their institutions, their dignity, their environment, their general well being. By preserving the place and the host, the visitor then becomes the beneficiary of wonderful and uplifting experiences that go beyond fabricated events and experiences. They become touched by genuine encounters with the host population and there is a fair exchange of value between host and guest."*

*Peter Apo, Director, Native Hawaiian Tourism and Hospitality Association*

*If you're going to promote culture, entertainment, etc. It isn't free. Just as when somebody gets off the ship when you're sick you go to a physician, it isn't free.*

*When somebody gets off the boat, who wants to be entertained, it's not free.*

*Van Horn Diamond*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** Representatives from environmental organizations had great misgivings about this strategic initiative. Several said it was unfair to characterize land use laws as "highly restrictive" and to regard agricultural conservation as out of date. Sig Schuster of Kaneohe Bay Cruises expressed frustration over mandated beach closings, imposed in 1991. He said the water sports industry has suffered greatly as a result, with a market now roughly 15 percent of what it was a decade ago. He shared letters from visitors who were unable to pursue planned activities.

*"You term the land use laws as "highly restrictive" and that they "favor agriculture conservation over other uses of land controlled by the State. We feel that's an improper characterization. I'm opposed to the idea that the land use laws should be in any way changed, undermined or undercut ... For me, there are places that I still love that are agricultural."*

*Blake Oshiro, Sierra Club*

*Life of the Land finds it ironic that throughout this plan, Hawaii's natural environment is touted in the most lofty terms ... then goes on to say existing state land use system presents fundamental obstacles to the development of non-*

*traditional, low-impact forms of tourism. Now tourists are choosing to go to our neighbor islands, to see what Hawaii really looks like. Hopefully you are discovering that you cannot create a sense of place when the original place has been destroyed and recreated to look like other resort places.*

*Kat Brady, Life of the Land*

**Marketing:** Ray Tabata of the University of Hawaii Sea Grant Program, advocated having a visitor education program to help visitors enjoy Hawaii's unique resources and culture while promoting personal safety and discouraging walking on reefs: "A more coordinated effort of providing in-flight videos, hotel videos, visitor publications with specific target messages that will help reduce the cumulative effects of millions of visitors on our fragile environment and communities."

**Events:** Peter Apo encouraged the HTA to promote more interactions between visitors and residents.

*"We would have a much healthier industry if we could provide direct links between visitor and the many quality events and experiences that already exist for their own sake, are not specifically designed to attract visitors, but to which visitors are welcome. This is what gives these activities their special charm, particularly for the visitor. It's one thing to see a (staged) hula performance for a commercial luau. It's quite a far different experience to witness a real hula halau perform."*

**Infrastructure and Support Services:** Frances Viglielmo of the World Atomic Safety Holiday Campaign, warned that the Navy's nuclear facilities may not be ready for Y2K, opening up the state to lawsuits from the visitors who may be harmed by this potential disaster: "In the tourism industry and its government allies, you lay the foundation for a class action suit by tourists, particularly the mass of "no-English" speaking tourists who come here in total ignorance of their risk in being on this island where the Navy conducts nuclear submarine defueling. You folks have the class action lawsuits coming ... because you are taking state money to entice tourists when you know everything I have already told you."

## WINDWARD OAHU

Participants in this meeting were strongly connected to Hawaiian culture and were fiercely protective of their “country” lifestyle. As in other meetings, communication and community relations were of primary importance, followed by culturally appropriate product development. While skepticism was still present, participants overall said it was a good meeting and encouraged the HTA to continue the dialogue with communities. Airlift and infrastructure issues were not discussed at this meeting.

**Communication and Community Relations:** Diversified representation was a major issue at this meeting. Community members advocated having Board representatives from environmentalist, agriculture, entertainment industries, and Hawaiian communities. Participants also advocated having a continuing dialog with an advisory council made up of neighborhood boards, community associations, civic clubs, state and federal agencies. Participants noted imprecise usage of the Hawaiian language, indicating a lack of respect for the host culture that is evident in the tourism industry as a whole.

### ***Selected Comments***

*From my own standpoint, I would like to see the Visitor Industry Education Council resurrected and revitalized so that we can start in the schools in assuring that the kids understand and become involved in what is now Hawaii's largest industry.*

*Barbara Mills, Hawaii Ecotourism Association*

*The HTA should attempt to motivate and gain the respect of our local communities (those who have been conditioned to treat themselves as non-players in the tourism industry) by continuing to apply resources to community-oriented programs and events ... The key points are trust and a clear directive to offer the best to our visitors and to us as well.*

*Creative Planners of Hawaii*

*By coming to our communities you allow everyday citizens to input ... a lead other government agencies should consider following.*

*Keith Matsumoto, Pacific International Center for High Technology Research*

*I spend 12 hours a day with my passengers and ... the number one complaint is that they get a "Hawaii" experience and not a "Hawaiian" experience. True, there are Hawaiian words. But nowhere is there anything about what makes the Hawaiian people unique, and a person coming to Hawaii might benefit from knowing and experiencing those values. I think the tail is wagging the dog and the wrong people are in charge.*

*Dr. Ishmael Stagner, retired professor, tour bus driver*

*Hawaiian language markings are important to pronunciation of words and should be used in the visitor industry ... the word "aloha" is not one of the values and should be defined .... The fine thread that runs through the visitor industry is the spirit of Aloha that comes from individuals ... The important element is the people within the visitor industry ... we must internalize the understanding of aloha within them in order to bring out the uniqueness of Hawaii.*

*Earl Maikahikinapamaikala Tenn*

**Product Development:** The majority supported niche tourism, specifically community-based efforts. However, some warned that without truly incorporating Hawaiian values, the effort would fall short. Barbara Mills of the Hawaii Ecotourism Association offered to provide day activities such as hikes, snorkeling, whale watching and other one-day excursions for cruise ship travelers. Earl Maikahikinapamaikala Tenn pointed out that residents, especially those who work in the tourism industry --- needed to be better-educated about Hawaiian values in order to be better hosts. He noted that a report on Hospitality and Tourism Skill Standards was submitted to the School to Work program in 1996.

### **Selected Comments**

*Frankly the plan talks more about getting visitors to spend more, rather than to learn more, interact more, to study more, to appreciate more and to love more... Without a Hawaiian spiritual framework for the master plan, it cheapens Hawaii and all that is Hawaiian.*

*Dr. Ishmael Stagner, retired professor, tour bus driver*

*Unless Hawaii is positioned as a viable, thriving business community, our ability to market PICHTR's products and services (relating to sustainable development practices through renewable technologies) to the Asia-Pacific region will be severely diminished ... Agritourism, edutourism and technotourism provide significant opportunities to showcase our business base as well as the broader attractions to Hawaii. Ecotourism and other x-tourism initiatives can all be "piggybacking" the business emphasis.*

*Keith Matsumoto, Vice President/COO Pacific International Center for High Technology Research*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** Some were skeptical that the Board could change land use laws without opening up abuses to natural and cultural resources. However, some offered examples of regulations that could be changed to offer more intimate visitor experiences.

### **Selected Comments**

*It is easy to say that laws should be changed while sustaining the natural and cultural resources --- a possible magic act! But don't squeeze the goose too hard or you'll damage the feathers. More and more customers want a restful, peaceful, unchallenging experience --- that potential is already here in Hawaii --- and it certainly can be expanded further without appreciably changing laws.*

*Barbara Mills, Hawaii Ecotourism Association*

*On the roadside, maybe the industry could encourage the creation of areas where people with agricultural products can gather and sell. That might be coupled with*

*those who have a cottage industry. As I was campaigning this last year, you will see a lot of operations like that. And the police would be hounding them because it's not legal. Maybe talk to Kualoa Ranch or some other landowners about creating these places where interaction between tourists and local residents can happen.*

*Sen. Bob Nakata*

**Marketing:** Some participants offered specific areas that needed more marketing, such as Downtown Honolulu, and shopping centers. One suggestion that the HTA should serve as a clearinghouse or advisory group for marketing information rather than taking a “one-agency approach” to marketing that is not conducive to pursuing niche markets.

### ***Selected Comments***

*The downtown area has been neglected in the draft. It should be marketed as much as Waikiki ... Iolani Palace, Aloha Tower, Chinatown, the Capitol, etc. So many visitors think Waikiki is all there is.*

*Barbara Mills, Hawaii Ecotourism Association*

*What I've been doing is marketing our shopping for the last four years from various countries including Japan, Europe, Korea and China. Our industry has come together ... a year or two ago you would not have found this, but ... anything you find in Hawaii, pretty much you're going to find in Japan now ... we have to find other markets for our survival. So please keep us in mind.*

*Dolores Hanson, Shop Hawaii USA*

*The shrinking visitor numbers must be seen as an indicator of outdated marketing methods rather than a result of dwindling promotional resources ... A one-agency approach is not only unnecessary, but runs counter to highly segmented niche markets ... We must strive to develop and do business with organizations that continue to refine their business practices into 'anti-bureaucratic' and 'best practice' centers that engages all segments of operations. ... The HTA should*

*commit to a role that professionally administers analytical forecasts and pro-active intelligence from industry-supplied data and research.*

*Creative Planners of Hawaii*

**Events:** Consistent with the values expressed above, participants favored more intimate resident-visitor interactive types of events:

*I hope the Authority will be looking for already existing events to support ... that's important not only in the public relations with the community, but it's an enhancement of the tourist experience. I think we need to remember that one of the strong selling points of tourism in Hawaii is the quality of the people .... Tourists are hungry for the experience of relating to local people.*

*Sen. Bob Nakata*

## COUNTY SYNOPSIS - MAUI

Four meetings were held in this County: West Maui, East Maui, Molokai and Lanai. Area uniqueness was a big issue on all three islands. Those on Maui expressed a desire to remain distinct from Oahu, while those on Lanai and Molokai pressed for recognition as separate entities from Maui.

### WEST MAUI

This meeting constituted the smallest group statewide, due to an accident that closed the highway from 3:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Participants in this informal, 'talk-story' type of meeting voiced concerns consistent with bigger meetings held statewide: increased community input, environmental protection and customized marketing strategies for Maui. Regulation and investment incentives, airlift and infrastructure were not discussed. (Market Trends Pacific was unable to attend this meeting due to the aforementioned accident. No audio transcript of this meeting is available. Comments were excerpted from HTA staff notes.)

**Communication and Community Relations:** Janis Casco, director of the Maui Economic Development Board, talked about the launching of its Economic Literacy program for Maui's youth and adults. This was initiated to "create a community informed about the economy of Maui, including the interdependence of all industries and the opportunities it provides. This fall, third and fifth graders at two Maui elementary schools will begin an economics curriculum that will teach economic principles and provide discussion forums to talk about Maui's economy. Lahaina resident Dave Chenowith emphasized that the tourism industry needs to be sensitive to community concerns, such as playing music late into the night and disturbing residential areas.

**Product Development:** Dave Chenowith said the TSP does not adequately address environmental protection, which is fundamental for tourism. He also objected to cruise ships docking in Lahaina, which would kill the reefs. He stated that the HTA has the "clout" to help direct more funds toward environmental protection.



**Marketing:** Jim Killelt of Lahaina Gallery said that in order to attract quality visitors, Maui needs to offer “quality experiences.” He also noted that the marketing strategies for Maui would not be the same as other parts of the state. Due to the increasing use of “virtual reality” technologies, Napili resident Les Harris noted that the state needs to work harder to entice visitors. He suggested that counties pool their resources to promote each other.

**Events:** Similar to previous meetings, resident Tom Bartlett suggested that the HTA focus on events that encourage visitors and residents to interact.

## **EAST MAUI**

Friction resulted early in this meeting, when public testimonies were interrupted by efforts to immediately address what participants were saying before they finished their statements. This was perceived by participants as an attempt to suppress their ideas. Testimonies continued after attendees advised the Board ‘let people vent’ without interruption.

**Communication and Community Relations:** Participants in this meeting articulated the rift between the Hawaiian community and the tourism industry. Among the complaints against the tourism industry: inaccurate portrayals of the Hawaiian culture in tourism industry promotions, obstructing the observance of traditional Hawaiian practices such as fishing and gathering medicinal herbs. Public testimony opposing the airport runway extension was interrupted by an attempt to clarify the difference between Ke Kumu and previous foundation documents. Representatives from environmental and labor groups also talked about feeling alienated from tourism industry decision-makers. They all asked the Board to continue to listen and earn the trust of the community.

## ***Selected Comments***

*We have gone from a tourist industry of aloha and welcome to servitude and resentment. And that's why we're in such a predicament.*

*Resident*

*You use a lot of Hawaiian values here. But there's one thing that's missing is respect. What I see is my culture being treated like a commodity. My culture is not for sale. The spirit of Aloha is not for sale ... You've got to work with the local community. And changing how we view the tourist industry.*

*Blossom Feiteira, Community Development, Na Pa'e Kokua*

*Hawaiian hospitality is the key missing link for the visitors' experience today, yet industry decision-making does not include the Hawaiian perspective. Where is the Hawaiian perspective at the voting level?*

*Native Hawaiian Tourism and Hospitality Association*

*In these difficult times, we can't afford to have workers lose their jobs simply because the owner wants to be in control and doesn't want a unionized work force. Turmoil in the workplace does not make for good public relations. There's no question that tourism creates jobs. But the industry will only gain acceptance in the community if these jobs are seen to provide our people with security and a decent standard of living.*

*William Drewery, ILWU Chairman, West Maui*

*Listen because people are feeling left out. Somehow our strategies have been focused on standard business practices and undermined the underlying sense of aloha. I think a whole lot of people would feel a lot better about efforts to promote tourism if there was a balance in this report. I don't really see that.*

*Lucienne Clenave, Sierra Club Maui*

**Product Development:** Similar to the comments above, many participants encouraged the HTA to support culturally accurate tourism products. One participant noted that tourists want to interact with local people, but rarely have the opportunity to do so. Some participants pointed out a need for greater emphasis on environmental protection, saying the plan needs to specify how the HTA plans to preserve natural resources while increasing visitor numbers at the same time.

Participants from the Maui Arts and Cultural Center were supportive of efforts to include cultural tourism in the plan. They suggested that the HTA look into funding existing cultural events as a resources for additional visitor spending.

Representatives from the Maui Economic Development Board were supportive of the “broad” definition of tourism, which incorporates different niche markets and encourages economic diversity. MEDB representatives shared their efforts to market the island as a business destination, hosting conferences in high-tech and policy development.

### ***Selected Comments***

*This document ... it's like you got your hand caught in the cookie jar and you say, oh, I was going to give it to little brother here ... communities are being divided, lied to, people are disenfranchised. We have a culture here that has been made to give and give. It's a never-ending battle to maintain integrity of simple things. To get the fish, to collect limu, go up to the mountain to gather herbs for medicine. And what do we see? Tourists. They buy big places. They take over the beaches. They put up high walls. Our cultural places are being destroyed by people with money. Tourism is not a bad thing. But the lynchpin is the Hawaiian people. Everybody's knowledge has to work together.*

*Ed Lindsey, Hawaiian Agency and Organizations/Na Kupuna*

*We need to spend money first of all on sensitizing, cultural training for every single brand new GM, corporate head, CEO and everybody that comes over here that has anything to do with the tourist industry here. They need to understand who's working for them. Hawaii is a unique place. These people come from corporate mentalities, thinking everybody has to be the same.*

*Akoni Akana, Friends of Mokihaia*

*I work for the park service in Kula, and I see more tourists in a month than a lot of you get in a year ... Tourists tell me they don't get to meet local people. Sometimes I'm the only local person they meet, and they've been here three weeks. People want to experience Hawaii. The local people. The Hawaii experience.*

*Charles Silva, Resident*

*If you don't have protecting the natural resources as one of your initiatives, people will not come here.*

*Hannah Bernard, Hawaii Wildlife Fund*

*Cultural tourism can differentiate Hawaii and specifically Maui from other beach recreation destinations. We have a very mixed group of people --- both (residing) here and coming here --- of varying sophistication and varying senses of adventure about what they would like to see.*

*Karen Fischer, Managing Director, MACC*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** Consistent with other meetings statewide, environmental groups warned against using this initiative to open up agriculture and conservation lands to development. As one participant noted:

*Those regulatory obstacles are there for real reasons, because there have been abuses, because some people don't use common sense ... I've talked to thousands of people every year as conservation organizer for the Sierra Club ... They like what they're getting here. They like the scale that it is now ... Let each island develop their own unique places and encourage what is special about each, rather than try to make each a carbon copy of the other ... The Sierra Club has done a survey of our visitors, asking about people's concerns. I would challenge the visitor industry to do a similar survey. Do it scientifically.*

*Lucienne Clenave, Sierra Club Maui*

**Marketing:** A number of participants expressed strong concerns about cultural accuracy in marketing the Hawaiian culture instead of perpetuating “wrong” ideas (e.g. girls in coconut bras). Participants said that previous marketing campaigns tend to fantasies of what visitors think Hawaii is like instead of presenting the true richness of Hawaii. The drawback of Hawaii as a “fantasy” destination has also served as a stumbling block to the MEDB’s efforts to attract more scientific and technological meetings. One participant noted a lack of Hawaii advertising museums or botanical gardens in nature-oriented publications like *Audubon* magazine.

### ***Selected Comments***

*When they come over here, because we had girls with coconut bras in our marketing, we'd better give them girls with coconut bras. The problem is that the people doing the marketing, running the hotels, car companies and everything else that has to do with tourism, have no idea what the culture of Hawaii is about.*

*Akoni Akana, Friends of Mokihala*

*We're promoting ecotourism but we are not advertising in magazines that adventure and ecotourist people read. I get Audubon magazine and I never see Hawaii advertised in any of those magazines. Also I see nothing in here about museums, botanical gardens and places like that.*

*Mary Anderson, Resident*

*Two years ago, we had some initiatives to increase the number of scientific and technical meetings that were coming to Maui. And then, while they're here, try to get them interested in developing the high-tech industry here ... One of the messages we've been trying to get out is that yes, you can have serious fun here. But you can also do very serious business here. So we encourage you to shape that message very carefully, because it is a challenge for us.*

*Jeanne Skog, President/CEO, Maui Economic Development Board*

**Events:** Many participants encouraged the HTA to develop accountability measures --- both before and after --- for evaluating cultural events funded by the Authority. A few participants expressed support for signature events that generate national media coverage. However, as one participant noted, large events do not always translate into greater income for the surrounding communities. According to Guy Kittrell of Classy Taxi: "Visitors don't come down to Lahaina. The Kaanapali Golf Tournament is the worst week for me."

**Infrastructure and Support Services:** Most participants opposed extending the airport runway, although some acknowledged a need to improve roads and parks. One participant noted that the County's inability to maintain parks was because of HTA's share of the TAT. She suggested that the HTA redirect the money back to the counties.

### ***Selected Comments***

*People want to come to Maui. We need to improve the road to Hana. We need to add more parks. We need to enhance what we have here. We don't need a longer runway. We don't need to widen the roads.*

*Mary Anderson, Resident*

*Do whatever you can to facilitate hotels bringing their telecommunications up to speed, not just in meeting rooms. I'm talking about hotel rooms, where visitors have had difficulty in being connected on the Internet with their businesses back home. I think as time goes on that will be a hindrance to attracting more of these types of meetings on Maui. We're already hearing about it.*

*Jeanne Skog, President/CEO, Maui Economic Development Board*

*Half of the County's shortfall is in your hands. I find some irony in your pointing out in your report that the parks' infrastructure is poorly maintained. The maintenance fund for Maui has to be cut considerably so that you could have this money. And I have a hard time seeing how taking money from the Counties' budget for infrastructure to give it to tourist promotion is a helpful activity.*

*Madeline D'Embeaux, Representing Councilmember Nishiki*

**Airlift:** One completed comment sheet about airlift questioned the wisdom of a small state having as many international airports as California:

*I'd like to know more about how we're going to increase airlift without having five international airports. I think there are some hidden costs that come along with bigger facilities. I don't think that we've gotten a thorough analysis of the societal costs of these unwanted byproducts."*

*Lucienne Clenave, Sierra Club Maui*

## **MOLOKAI**

Molokai participants were concerned with preserving the unique identity of their island. Several talked about the elements that distinguish Molokai from the rest of the state and the rest of Maui County: undeveloped land and active Hawaiian culture. Residents pressed for ongoing representation from their island.

Last January, Molokai recently qualified to become a rural enterprise community, receiving \$250,000 a year for 10 years, getting tax credits for employment programs and being eligible for tax-exempt bonds from the federal government. Molokai's strategic plan includes an economic recovery based on agriculture, aquaculture, small entrepreneurial businesses and cultural tourism.

One recurring theme among the comments was the residents' uneasy relationship with landowner Molokai Ranch. Many of those who testified opposed the recent establishment of luxury campsites, saying the Ranch exploited a loophole in the regulations and circumvented local authority by going straight to Maui County. Still, one resident pointed out that the town of Maunaloa and the pride of its residents have been revived, thanks to the new development.

**Communication and Community Relations:** Several participants talked about the island's 'activist' reputation. Some embraced it as a necessity to protecting their way of life. Others pointed out that residents are not against tourism itself, but merely want tourism products to reflect their values. To that end, many urged the Board to continue to listen to the community, possibly by

including Molokai residents in future advisory groups. They also urged the Board to use the Internet to make information accessible. One participant recommended investing in the island's youth by funding a TV crew for the Molokai Media Center.

### ***Selected Comments***

*The key is to make sure you get our people on your island on those advisory groups when you start talking about our island. Let us tell you what we want. Don't come to us and say, 'This is the plan.' Let us tell you what we want.*

*Ron Kimball, Ka Molokai Makahiki*

*We would like to try to become regulators of what kind of tourism is best for our island. We like to think small and not so grandiose because we feel that's the only thing that's beneficial, without giving up who we are, or selling out the spirit of who we represent.*

*Collette Machado, Office of Hawaiian Affairs*

*At the camp ground, they restricted community access to the beach. They're advertising it as the place that people think Hawaii is like, but they didn't want local traffic coming in unrestricted because it would ruin the ambience that these people are paying \$150-\$200 a night for. But I think the people that come to Molokai are people who want to get involved with the local people.*

*DeGray Vanderbilt, Pau Hana Ohana Community Foundation*

*Molokai Ranch can plunk in millions of dollars but there's this detachment between what they want to do and what the community wants to see happen. And they'll lose. People will judge us for always being against something. But I think if you listen carefully, we do not want certain things but we also have alternatives. So I think if we listen, there's a way of moving things here together.*

*John Sabas, Resident*



**Product Development:** One resident said he was pleased to see that the HTA will lend organization to the tourism industry. According to its strategic plan, Molokai's goal is to build a production-based economy based on agriculture and aquaculture, small businesses and cultural tourism. Participants cited examples of local enterprises that have been successful at both, with products such as limu, shrimp, coffee and macadamia nuts. Representatives from the island's youth expressed a desire to maintain agricultural lands for their future. The community also emphasized that small-scale, intimate, environmentally and culturally sensitive tourism products would open more doors than large-scale wholesalers.

Several participants noted that the new Molokai Ranch facilities had taken business away from existing hotels --- which in turn had destroyed culturally significant sites in the process of building. However, one participant pointed out that existing hotels need to be refurbished in order to be filled.

### ***Selected Comments***

*Limit the number of visitors based on the number allowed to sustain a healthy environment. As a community we would like to pace our growth in tourism.*

*Iwalani Kadowaki, Akaku*

*All the report really talks about is changing what Hawaii has to offer for whatever country or community outside of Hawaii is doing well economically. Earlier it was Japan and everybody scrambled to get the Japanese here rather than say, 'Let's keep what we have here that people come to enjoy. Let's not just go after the buck.' And this report talks about getting the guys that come here to spend more bucks.*

*DeGray Vanderbilt, Pau Hana Ohana Community Foundation*

*We may not get the hard, heavy bucks all at one time, but if we keep this slow, easy trend of people who love us, who when they leave, want to come back. I think our signature, the most Hawaiian island, is a damn good one. And I think we should keep it that way.*

*Barbara Schonely, Island Kine Auto Rental*

*According to the strategic plan, Molokai's economy will be strong, diversified and production-based. The rich farmlands and fish ponds will be revitalized and productive once again. Everyone who relies on traditional subsistence practices to feed their families will also be able to do so.*

*Karen Holt, Executive Director of the Molokai Community Service Council*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** Regulation is a double-edged sword for the residents of Maui. On the one hand, residents support reducing bureaucracy for rebuilding fish lots and other similar endeavors. However, many oppose the land use regulations that allowed Molokai Ranch to build its luxury campsites.

### ***Selected Comments***

*When Maui tightens its regulations about charter helicopter tours on Maui, guess where they all come? Halawa Valley. So other islands are going to destroy our quality of tourism on this island ... I hear it everyday from visitors, That was a very spiritual place, but too bad the helicopter was there. You can tell them they're not originating here, but that doesn't help their experience. I've called and made complaints but they go nowhere ... so when you talk about coordinated effort, other agencies in the state need to take us seriously because we're not just calling for ourselves, it's going to hurt tourism.*

*Cheryl Corbell, IMUA*

*The luxury campsites that Molokai built on the west end were built on land that was designated for agricultural use, and built without the permission of our local planning commission or any other authority. They got through a loophole. The*

*County of Maui found it and it's being sued about. They're charging tourists \$170 a day for 100 units and they are not paying hotel room taxes on those units because they are on farm lands. I worry when we have a recommendation as you folks are considering, that we need to somehow loosen our land use controls over development to bring more tourists to our islands. It doesn't make sense to me that that was allowed to happen. We now have a bunch of empty rooms on the west end. A lot of environmental and cultural sacrifices were made to put those things up. One of the richest fishing grounds in the state is now gone. There were historic sites that were bulldozed in the process of building.*

*Karen Holt, Executive Director of the Molokai Community Service Council*

**Marketing:** Many residents say they want to maintain their niche of culturally and environmentally sensitive, soft adventure tourists. Several said the majority of their travel business comes from the European and kamaaina markets.

### ***Selected Comments***

Seventy-five percent of the visitors who come to Molokai Ranch are from Oahu, the Big Island of Hawaii and Kauai. Anywhere between 55-60 percent of the people that come here, heard of us by word of mouth.

*Lawrence Aki*

When you say Europe isn't a focus, a lot of Europeans love the outdoors. At our place, we've had, in the last week, visitors from Zurich, Belgium and Germany.

*Jack Pugh*

In our Enterprise Community, we talked about appealing to residents of Hawaii coming to Molokai as a place to relax, have family reunions, remember what it used to be. But we shouldn't disregard those people who come to Waikiki who may also want to come to Molokai.

*Frances Feeter, Enterprise Community*

**Events:** Two of the island's key community events have recently lost funding: the Ka Molokai Makahiki, founded 18 years ago, and Ka Hula Piko, founded 10 years ago. An overwhelming number of participants advocated restoring funding for these two events, both of which celebrate Hawaiian culture while bringing visitors and residents together. One critical issue for Molokai: finding a visitor coordinator to space out events and channel visitors into the local economy.

### ***Selected Comments***

*The best project we have as far as community rallies is the Ka Molokai Makahiki. The schools benefit directly, the children and families come, and the community participates in a festive singing and entertainment. We need to revitalize that event. That's where the people come out. They don't ask for much. They take only \$5,000 to run that operation, and they do a lot. They give t-shirts away, they coordinate with the schools, and they have a whole cultural event right in this park. There's a lot of community volunteers and they find some homegrown entertainment. That's one of our best events. Ka Hula Piko is a good deal. That's truly intended to attract off-island visitors, to have occupancy come up. I don't go to that but it does provide for the local entrepreneurs with their wares and food.*

*Collette Machado, Office of Hawaiian Affairs*

*The state and county are losing their minds when they don't support events like the Makahiki, as well as that of the Molokai Ka Hula Piko, which brings in more than 4,000 people in November just in that one general area. It has the potential to be a weeklong or two week-long event. At the cost of \$30,000 it would fill every single hotel on this island and the return would be more than seven times.*

*Lawrence Aki*

**Airlift:** This was a significant issue for participants. Several advocated having airlines send more of the safer, 38-seat planes instead of expanding the airport. Many also favored funding a \$3 million Molokai/Maui ferry instead. Because airline coupons are not readily available for mainland travelers, many also said the cost of airfare for those coming from the mainland was prohibitive.

### **Selected Comments**

*I support expanding the airport to bring more people here, but I want it safe. A classmate of mine who's an interisland pilot for Aloha says he wouldn't want to be one of those pilots flying those jets to Molokai because it's really dangerous.*

*Ron Kimball, Ka Molokai Makahiki*

*I am, with my husband, a wholly-owned homesteader. I will be there holding signs if they plan to take away some of the homesteader's land to expand the airport. What they should do is fly in the 38-seat Island Air DASH on a more regular basis instead of only four flights a day. We don't need a bigger airport.*

*Kammy Purdy, Executive Director, Molokai Business Association*

*We're looking at a \$57 million project to expand the airport. But another option would be to look at more efficient smaller plans, like the 38-seat DASH. There were 50 angry native Hawaiians who felt, why didn't Hawaiian homes talk to them before the DOT. Let's try to look at these carriers doing more efficient things instead of worrying about bigger planes.*

*Collette Machado, Office of Hawaiian Affairs*

**Infrastructure and Support Services:** Several residents talked about developing Malama Cultural Park as a place where canoe clubs and hula halau could practice, kupuna could weave lauhala. It would serve as a magnet for tourists and a site for marketing local products. Aside from park maintenance, infrastructure problems include sewer improvements, better recycling arrangements to haul away "junk cars", water supply, improved roads and a shortage of rental cars.

## **Selected Comments**

*An argument over the golf course is founded on the part of residents that this island does not have enough water to support even currently planned needs. So if we start putting up hotels and golf courses, we're definitely jeopardizing the place we live.*

*Karen Holt, Executive Director of the Molokai Community Service Council*

*We had agreed as a community that Malama Park would be the tourism facility in Kaunakakai. It would provide a feature unlike what is existing now on the island. People laugh at the park, especially people from the County. It's the only park under the DBEDT inventory. And they don't know what to do. At one event, we had 1,400 people there who stayed after sunset. So the facility there has a lot of promise.*

*Collette Machado, Office of Hawaiian Affairs*

## **LANAI**

Several participants felt that Lanai is suffering the after-effects of overdevelopment. As on Molokai, many advocated having island representation on the HTA so their concerns would not be forgotten. Some also pushed for more diverse representation on the Board, "not just hotel people." Airlift was not discussed in this meeting.

**Communication and Community Relations:** A number of residents expressed apprehension that the island's longtime residents were being priced out of the housing market. Many said the aloha spirit was eroded by the demands of the rising cost of living on the island. Some advocated educating the residents about "the bigger picture." Some also related that public decisions tended to favor Oahu than the neighbor Islands.

## **Selected Comments**

*Development happened too fast for Lanai, and the people have been caught in the middle. I think what has happened to Lanai is hurting us. We're losing good residents, the people that really make tourism work in this state. I came to this state as a West Coast haole and there wasn't a dollar attached to aloha. It came from the heart. We have the lowest unemployment in the state. You know why? Because everybody's working three jobs to try and survive. And that is a byproduct of the hotels. We need your help to keep the wages up and keep people happy that are doing this work.*

*Ron McOmber, Lanai Resort & L.S.G.*

*If you're going to look at increasing visitor spending, the opportunities are obviously on Oahu. All too often, in communities like this, not all have the vision of being the State of Hawaii. A lot of times, it's the state of Oahu. That's why I think it's important that you have ongoing Neighbor Island participation in this process. I just ask that whatever that leadership is, it's someone or a group of people that have the energy and enthusiasm to make me want to follow. Not just to manage the funds, or the policies and procedures. If we just have management I think we're going to be wasting our time.*

*Butch Gima, Destination Lanai*

*Part of the concern is the impact of the increase in visitors and how they integrate with the local residents, how that makes them feel. It's very tough psychologically to host a million new people in your community, day in and day out. There's a need to deal not only with the people who work in the industry, but the whole community.*

*Pat Reilly, Resident*

*When you set up advisory groups, don't forget that it's not only hotel operators that you can have on those groups. Look at other people because there is valuable information from other sources on the island.*

*Resident*

**Product Development:** Several residents warned against depleting natural resources. According to one participant, not all businesses who label themselves 'ecotourism' are environmentally or culturally sensitive. One participant suggested that the HTA "institutionalize" protocols or processes to evaluate the impact on natural resources on an ongoing basis. One participant suggested having a Pineapple Museum or interactive attraction --- like a working plantation --- to promote community involvement in the tourism industry. Similar to other meetings statewide, residents advocated a more small-scale, intimate tourism product that promotes visitor-resident interaction.

### ***Selected Comments***

*I think we need to go back to a more appropriate word, visitor --- someone you welcome in to your home --- instead of tourists --- which we associate to the group tour kind of program.*

*Councilman Riki Hokama*

*If you don't stop attacking our natural resources, you're going to have nothing for your tourists to come back to. The Hale Road is being inundated by 4-wheel drive vans everyday and being destroyed by someone running ecotourism tours. We find people in sensitive areas they should not be in. What do you think is going to happen if one of these tourists gets shot by accident by a hunter? That will be the end of our hunting. Do you know how much money hunters spend 26 weeks out of the year on this island?*

*Ron McOmber*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** Councilman Riki Hokama pointed out that Maui County had already taken measures to legalize bed and breakfasts without waiting for a statewide policy.



This has been a particular boost to Lanai, since hotels traditionally run \$200-\$300 a night. One resident --- who rents out a house to residents --- related his frustration at having to absorb the 1.25% increase in the TAT because he did not want to raise his prices.

**Marketing:** Similar to other meetings, several residents noted that the kamaaina traveler has been neglected in marketing campaigns, and has not been made to feel welcome in visitor-oriented facilities.

### ***Selected Comments***

*We should market to our own residents and communities what this industry means to us, why, and when we can, use our own facilities as a place of choice. We can improve the visitor image to the resident by allowing them to feel part of it, that they are welcome to use the visitor plan within their own communities.*

*Councilman Riki Hokama*

*You better take care of the kamaaina traveler. They're the biggest assets you folks have got.*

*Ron McOmber, Lanai Resort & L.S.G.*

**Events:** Participants noted that there is competition not only between counties, but also within counties, as is the case with Lanai, Maui and Molokai. They urged the board to highlight specific events that are unique to each area, that allow each to express its own identity.

**Infrastructure and Support Services:** As on Maui and Molokai, park maintenance was a major infrastructure problem. Councilman Riki Hokama asked for guidelines in allocating limited funding for the parks.

### ***Selected Comments***

*We have a problem in this County. We cannot take care of all the parks we want at the level we want to. So I think we need to pinpoint exactly what we should focus*

*our resources on. Is it big regional parks? Is it specific scenic spots that the resident and visitor can appreciate? Should we maintain and buy beach parcels and keep it in a natural state for visitors and residents to use?*

*Councilman Riki Hokama*

## COUNTY SYNOPSIS - KAUAI

One meeting was held in this County. This County provided the greatest Neighbor Island turnout for one meeting, with most participants supporting the draft TSP as a way to achieve balance among all the different interests. However, there was strong opposition against HTA's advocacy of land use changes among those concerned with environmental protection.

**Community involvement:** This meeting generated a large turnout, estimated at 135 attendees, with more than five hours of testimony. The majority of testimony expressed support for the draft TSP as consistent with the values put forth by the County itself. Several saw the draft TSP as a start toward achieving balance --- between the environment and tourist industry, as well as between the host culture and visitors. As in all the public meetings, there were calls for ongoing dialogue between the HTA and community groups to help in identifying events and projects that have growth potential. The draft TSP was seen by one participant as one of the first steps to get the word out that Hawaiians can compete globally in the high-tech industry. Kauai-based high-tech companies were challenged to search island clubs nationwide for alumni of local high schools to lure them back home.

### ***Selected Comments***

*No one can speak better about the Kauai product than someone from Kauai. There should be ongoing dialogue between HTA and community groups. These community groups need to stay involved by reporting priorities to the HTA on a regular basis. The community can assist you in identifying events or projects that have significant growth potential.*

*Mayor Maryann Kusaka*

*The visitor industry has employed and fed my family for three generations. For years I struggled with one wish: I wished the visitors knew us better. After reading the draft strategic plan I feel this objective is closer than it has ever been because*

*you're really broadening the approach. Collaboration is not always easy. In fact it usually involves some discomfort. But when done in earnest, it is long lasting and extremely fruitful.*

*Nani Morrison, Treks Enterprises*

*Out of all the work on the general plan, I saw how easy it was for me personally to have strong opinions about what should or shouldn't happen, who the good guys are, who the bad guys are, how things have to be. And what the General Plan has taught me so far is that it isn't that simple. I commend you for seeking to build bridges.*

*Roxanne MacDougall, MacDougall and Associates*

*I love your Hawaiian values but there may be more words that might be added. The word is kanu. Kanu is to plant. In this room perhaps most of us are in favor of this document. But what about those that are outside? Those who protest or come with banners. How do you reach them? You kanu the seed of love. You kanu ideas they might benefit from. As a kanaka maoli and one who served on the historic preservation of the land I think you have been very sensitive in your approach.*

*Aletha Kaohi, Resident*

*I think you are the marketing experts. I trust you. I support you to take care of those areas that you do well. But I think some of the underlying data here is weak. Fifty percent of people support tourism, 50 percent don't. Not everyone is going to buy into it. The presumption is in here that we have made a shift from other economies to a tourist-based economy is not fair. Tourism is one of the things that we are willing to accept in our community but it's not the only thing.*

*Cira Castillo, Resident*

*Hospitality, ho'okipa, is a partnership between host, place and guest. The host must drive the experience. Too much of what we have today is designed for the guest without consideration for the host. We have more to offer than hula and lei*

*making. As you move forward with your advocacy and vision I ask you to keep the host the central element of this hospitality.*

*Doug Chang, President, Native Hawaiian Tourism Hospitality Association*

*We urge you to partner with efforts such as ours and other environmentally minded organizations in a concerted effort to restore and protect the very natural resources you are selling. We urge you to bring your efforts of improving our tourist industry by initiating moku by moku plans, gathering the mana'o of that particular area and its people.*

*Makaala Kaaumoana, Vice Chair, Hui Hoomalu I Ka Aina*

**Product development:** There was widespread support for many of the niche markets outlined in the plan: health and wellness, music, events, high-tech. In addition, two cited the statewide economic impact of Dept. of Defense contracts at the Pacific Missile Range Facility, as well as the implications for tourism. (e.g. a year-round testing schedule in which someone could spend 3 weeks at a time at PMRF, and a \$5 million project that came out of a \$60,000 year-long marketing push.)

Several participants warned against putting the visitor needs first, pointing out that natural resources must be sustained and protected for the residents. There was also support for grassroots, small-scale tourism that allows people to get to know each other one-on-one. A number of participants also advocated funding visitor education programs regarding ocean safety and proper cultural and environmental protocols.

### ***Selected Comments***

*By having more agricultural products that our visitors can depend on, purchase, take back to their community, that name recognition gets out there. It boils down to more jobs and more profit for those people who are in that type of work.*

*Greg Gardiner, 101 Things to Do*

*One of the things I hear quite often from the visitor is that they would like to do things hands-on. Not just demonstrations at the hotel, but actually maybe a day with a farmer, a day with a fisherman, a day with a lei maker. Those are some of the things we should initiate.*

*Aletha Kaohi*

*A few dollars spent teaching visitors not to stomp all over our reefs will save the vital marine life that is the nursery for many critical resources. A short film explaining the appropriate behavior around these resources will save both coral and scraped knees.*

*Makaala Kaaumoana, Vice Chair, Hui Hoomalu I Ka Aina*

*I find unfortunately in your draft here that the ecology aspect seems to have not been emphasized enough. The benefits of managing Hawaii's natural resources should be maximized for the residents. You talk about the assets of Hawaii tourism. You mention the pristine environment. I would challenge you to go out there and find them. We have a problem of overuse and misuse.*

*Dr. Carl Berg, Hawaiian Wildlife Tours*

*What we're trying to do is not build a sustainable visitor industry. What we're trying to do is build sustainable Hawaiian communities of people. What drives our economy is not tourism, but our unique ecosystems and our Hawaiian culture.*

*Don Heacock, KSAS*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** The majority of participants supported streamlining government regulations, which are seen as obstacles to tourism growth. Some questioned whether it was under the HTA's mandate --- perceived to be a tourism advocacy group --- to interfere with county land use regulations.

## **Selected Comments**

*I would hope that whatever regulations come out of this, whatever changes, will both protect the land without adding more complexity that makes it difficult for us to do the very thing we're here to do. Our mission in Princeville Ranch is to keep the lands open and green and beautiful so people want to come there.*

*Roxanne MacDougall, MacDougall and Associates*

*Our public resources are challenged with the amount of use and lack of funding for their maintenance, and protection. I support changes to the local laws which provide for privately owned land to commence commercial activity with minimal or no disruption of the surrounding community.*

*Lynn McCrory, Pahio Resorts*

*I'm very concerned that something to revitalize our tourism goes so far-reaching to talk about our county land use regulations. I think that's way out of line. There may be people who don't want a B&B in their community.*

*Cira Castillo, Resident*

*I'm not sure that a government agency who is really just an industry advocacy should go around advocating for changes in our government here. I think you should be going in and restoring Hawaii's natural and cultural resources. You should be helping to restore the community, the native Hawaiian community value systems. We should continue to look at agrarian aspects, which is really the rural aspect of Kauai, which is why everyone comes here.*

*Dr. Carl Berg, Hawaiian Wildlife Tours*

**Marketing:** A number of participants pointed out the growing importance of the Internet in reaching potential customers. One participant advocated having a common directory linking all visitor and tourism-related websites. The West Kauai Community Development Corp. preregistered the domain name "HTA.info" for the Authority, while another offered the Authority an Internet account.

A representative from the Pacific Missile Range Facility pointed out that --- thanks to statewide partnerships --- marketing high-technology facilities benefits the entire state.

**Events:** The majority of business organizations supported major, nationally televised events and the development of island events into signature events. One participant from the Prince Albert Foundation thanked the Authority for its support of the Prince Albert Music Festival, which informed visitors and reminded residents of Hawaii's royalty and its world-renowned involvement in the arts.

**Airlift:** The Kauai Chamber of Commerce supports having more direct flights into Kauai, pointing to increases in visitor numbers as a result. Another participant noted that a longer runway not only brings in more visitors, but also aids economic diversification by facilitating the export of Kauai products.

**Infrastructure:** Substandard maintenance of public parks and other visitor-frequented areas were blamed in part to HTA's funding, which was perceived to have reduced funds for the County. Suggestions included redirecting those funds back to visitor-frequented areas as part of HTA's mandate. One participant disputed the claim that the counties are entitled to the TAT, relating that its original intent was to provide funding for the HVCB and the Convention Center.

### ***Selected Comments***

*We have substandard conditions at premiere visitor attractions. I know you are not the funding source for these projects. But I do know you have influence and can help us by advocating for us in these visitor destination areas that need state assistance and attention.*

*Mayor Maryann Kusaka*

*The Neighbor Islands have over one-half of the inventory plant and generate one half of the hotel tax revenues. But the HVCB only allocates 18 percent of the total pie. We're getting the short end of the stick.*

*Hollis Crozier, General Manager, Ameritech Cellular*



*We have been able to get money to dredge Kikiaola Boat Harbor to accommodate cruise ship tenders, little boats that go back and forth to the cruise ships. That could be a floating hotel offshore off West Kauai, bring passengers in to experience the richness of our culture, take excursions to Waimea Canyon out to Hanapepe, wherever, and go back to the floating hotel without a major infrastructure impact.*

*Bill Peay, West Kauai Community Development Corp.*

## COUNTY SYNOPSIS - HAWAII

Two meetings were held in Hawaii County: at that Aston Keahou Beach Resort in Kona, and at the Hawaii Community College in Hilo. As on Kauai, this island featured support for the draft TSP, with some participants testifying at both East Hawaii and West Hawaii meetings. Many said they were encouraged by the call for community input, and urged others to take advantage of such opportunities. Similar to other islands, concerns about overdevelopment were voiced. A number of participants talked about ongoing efforts to maintain Hawaii Island's unique cultural sites and disseminate unique elements such as paniolo history. Agtourism was a strong theme on this island. Several welcomed streamlining the permitting process to allow ranchers to supplement their income during "slow periods" by hosting visitors.

### WEST HAWAII

As in all meetings statewide, community involvement was a big issue for participants in the West Hawaii meeting. Unlike other meetings, where participants encouraged the HTA to open more avenues to the public, West Hawaii participants urged each other to take advantage of the existing opportunities for community input. The majority was supportive of the draft TSP's attempts to bring diverse opinions together. Advocates for environmental protection warned against choosing tourism growth without evaluating the islands' carrying capacity. Airlift was not discussed at this meeting.

**Communication and Community Relations:** Participants urged fellow residents to take advantage of all opportunities to provide public input, not just the HTA public meetings. They urged the HTA not to make it a one-time effort, but to continue the dialogue with the community. Several residents reiterated that the special qualities of the people of Hawaii that lure visitors back to Hawaii, and that it is up to the community to define its "specialness" to the HTA.

## **Selected Comments**

*It takes a lot to make tourism happen in Hawaii. The HTA, the HVB, they all want to make it happen. But it cannot happen without you. Please contact the association that benefits you. You are the people who are going to make it happen.*

*Scott Bell, Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce*

*Everyone in this group can find a fault with the plan. Everyone in this room can find fault with their husband or wife, their boss, their company, their state. But really, everyone needs to get involved, then let the HTA figure out where they can help us make a difference.*

*David Richard, Big Island Group*

*We appreciate the idea that you care about us. We have never been asked before. We are small cogs in a very big wheel. We appreciate that opportunity. We would like to continue the dialogue.*

*Patti Cook, Cook's Adventures*

*So often, programs are done in windowless rooms. It's important that you're bringing this out into the community. If we're going to support the HTA or other activities we've got to get out and let our elected officials know about this. So please be active when that opportunity presents itself, as you are tonight.*

*Jim Frazier, Natural Energy Lab of Hawaii Authority*

*Community buy-in is crucial. We know that. I have been one of these people who have filed lawsuits and fought government in the past. No matter how good a plan is, if we don't get the community buy-in it's doomed to failure. Please, please, no matter what else we do, let's plant the seeds within the community, let them germinate and let's just be the tools to implement it. Let's just not risk the chance of having somebody say, 'Oh, here's the state going to shove something down our throats again.'*

*Councilwoman Nancy Pisicchio*

**Product Development:** The majority of residents supported the diversity of tourism products advocated by the draft TSP, acknowledging that the majority of these niches already exist on the island. Several noted the interrelationships between tourism and other industries, and for tourism to serve as a link toward greater economic diversification. Many stressed that the island's unique lifestyle should be preserved, with a goal toward "better tourism" instead of "more" tourism. A number of participants also advocated community-based interpretations of local history and culture.

### ***Selected Comments***

*We're in favor of the visitor industry but we're in favor of diversifying our economic structure also and see opportunities in agriculture, aquaculture, earth sciences with astronomy, volcanology, ocean sciences, health and wellness and others.*

*Marni Herkes, Big Island Business Council*

*We urge you to give priority consideration to cultural and historical attractions such as Heritage Corridors that focus on locally presented information.*

*Tomoi Namori, Palama la Kona Heritage Preservation Council*

*We have a cowboy history here but nobody really knows it. My family does mini rodeos, which shows visitors that there were cowboys here before Texas become a state. I love to use that line. Because the Texans are like, 'No way!' They don't know this. We strongly support the HTA's draft plan because they demonstrate support for community-based cultural preservation and interpretation.*

*Keikilani Kainoa, Paniolo Preservation Society*

*We at the Natural Energy Lab need to do a lot more in telling a very unique story. Maybe within the next two years you'll see activities down there that will not only complement our visitor traffic but will be educational for our local people as well. We have very definite plans for that.*

*Jim Frazier, Natural Energy Lab of Hawaii Authority*

*I'm delighted to see you have ag tourism as an important component of the strategic plan. I think it's got enormous potential to increase visitors' length of stay, expenditures and their enjoyment, at the same time increasing the profitability and sustainability of the farms in the community.*

*Ken Fleming, University of Hawaii Agricultural Economics professor*

*For me, the plan sets a framework for an important discussion that we have to have, hopefully in the next 24 months. That discussion involves: at what point do we stop growing? Through the year 2005 we have compounded growth of about four and a half percent. This would be fine if we lived on a continent but we don't. This island can only withstand certain capacities. So your first year strategic plan sets in motion what I hope in the next 24 months will be a realistic look at what capacities we can sustain and be economically viable at the same time.*

*John DeFries, Native Sun Business Group*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** The majority of participants supported streamlining state and county regulations to ease permitting processes, allowing smaller ranches and farms to supplement their income through visitor stays. One participant noted that cumbersome regulations foster suspicion and distrust of government entities among both residents and the business community.

### ***Selected Comments***

*We hope to encourage the state to provide incentives, encourage one-stop permitting for ecotourism activities and other low-impact nature tourism through partnerships with private resources on conservation lands.*

*Scott Bell, Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce*

*Integration and consolidation of planning and regulatory processes of more collaboration of state and county efforts is one of our more important economic issues especially this year. In this realm, we would support changes in land use*

*laws to encourage ecotourism product development. We would not, nor have we in the past, supported inappropriate management techniques.*

*Marni Herkes, Big Island Business Council*

*With our goals focusing on preserving Hawaii's paniolo heritage we are equally committed to sustaining the economic viability of our ranches. There are 400 ranches on the Big Island alone, most of them small, family-owned, Hawaiian Homelands enterprises. These small businesses need all the help they can get to survive and thrive as agricultural endeavors.*

*Keikilani Kainoa, Paniolo Preservation Society*

*The intent should not be to change the laws or abrogate the permitting process but to encourage compatible, appropriate activities with a significant educational component and the potential to enrich the visitor experience.*

*Rick West, Hawaii Island Alliance for the Future*

*The public has a great deal of distrust and suspicion because 1) those in the planning department are not properly trained for their jobs; 2) the one-size fits all permitting process (other states and counties have aggressively sought to establish tiered permitting systems --- tier one for low impact projects, tier five for high-impact projects) ; 3) fragmentation of authority among state and county agencies; and 4) creative interpretations of the law to get projects permitted quickly rather than changing the law.*

*Mike Matsukawa, Resident*

**Marketing:** Several participants supported the draft TSP's plan to tailor marketing plans according to each island's unique attributes. Some participants encouraged the Board to advocate wider usage of the island's proper name, Hawaii, instead of "The Big Island."

## **Selected Comments**

*This plan clearly recognizes and supports the unique attributes and distinctions of each of the neighbor islands. More than just feeling included and appreciated, it makes ultimate good sense to provide today's prospective visitors with information on the full range of facilities, services, activities, attractions and unique cultural practices and lifestyles on each island.*

*Gloriann Akau, Aloha Festivals*

*Would the HTA look at co-op advertising, using matching dollars for hotels and other people in a position to advertise in pre-arrival areas on the mainland. You might get extraordinary bang for the buck in comparison to just spending it on your own.*

*David Elsey, Resident*

*There's one concern I've had for years. Everybody seems to be referring to this island as the "Big Island" but it has its own name. It's the island of Hawaii. We're losing sight of that. I was wondering if the Authority could somehow get our name back.*

*Josephine Keliipio, Resident*

*The Big Island is well known. Its identity has been beneficial to the islands. But we cannot let the Big Island, as a marketing brand, substitute our identity with those who arrived here on the canoes and bestowed the name 'Hawaii'. We grew up with the understanding that Hawaii meant 'life-giving waters.' On one hand we have 'The Big Island' which has brought us a certain level of success. I would invite us to consider that the 'Island of the Life-giving Waters' may be where our future belongs.*

*John DeFries, Native Sun Business Group*

**Events:** A number of participants noted the economic benefits of national exposure from major events, not just for those in the tourism industry but for the whole economy. The Aloha Festivals was touted as an event that is not only economically successful, but also culturally significant.

### ***Selected Comments***

*There's an immediate result from most of the events, with hotel bookings picking up, greater retail spending and more interest in Kona-Kohala. All the community events like the Iron Man, the Senior Skins, Kona Coffee Cultural Festival, etc. provide opportunities for our local crafts people and artists to market their special products.*

*Jim Leightner, Chairman, Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce*

*We appreciate the fact that you're going to be supporting the Senior Skins Game because those kinds of national television exposure is immensely valuable, whether you're a tiny little retail shop like myself or a resort or airline.*

*Patti Cook, Cook's Adventures*

*The Aloha Festivals was started purely as an economic-driven event. Economics continue to play a major role. However, when you join us at the rim of Halemaumau Caldera at high noon, Saturday, August 28 for the installation of the Royal Court you will witness something that is not only quite stunning but also culturally significant. As the respected Kanakaole sisters utter native Hawaiian chants passed on to them by their mother, her mother's mother, members of the Halau O Kekuhi recreate ancient dances honoring Madame Pele. Mark my word: This is not show business. Likewise, when we stage our annual paniolo parade in Waimea, the individuals and families who ride represent generations of Hawaiian cowboy tradition. We have many thousands of volunteers and individuals who have come to respect both our economic validity and cultural validity.*

*Gloriann Akau, Aloha Festivals*



**Infrastructure and Support Services:** One participant said substandard maintenance of public parks was just one indication that the island has not been able to sustain increasing numbers of visitors:

*You can't bring any more tourists in here until you as leaders of the industry, in cooperation with the Legislature and the powers that be that spend our tax money, can figure out how to fix the toilets and restrooms in the parks. When half the plumbing fixtures don't work, people don't come back. Fix the infrastructure before you grow the industry.*

*Jeff Turner, Hawaii Green Party*

## **EAST HAWAII**

Similar to the West Hawaii meeting, the majority of participants were supportive of the draft TSP and the HTA's efforts to solicit community input. Also similar to West Hawaii was the widespread support for community-based cultural and historical interpretation. In East Hawaii, some participants expressed a need to gather data specific to their region so that they can tailor their tourism products more effectively. Events and airlift were not discussed at this meeting.

**Communication and Community Relations:** Participants cited the importance of public involvement, not just as a catalyst to energize the community but also to provide economic opportunities from 'special interest wholesalers' who prefer to work with local companies. One participant advocated resurrecting the Visitor Industry Education Council, designed to educate residents about opportunities in tourism. Another advocated a similar linkage relating to the School-to-Work program, as a way for residents to learn about their proud culture and learn to share it with visitors. One participant talked about the opening of a management-level hotel training institute for those in the Asia-Pacific region, using hotels on the Kohala Coast as a hands-on laboratory. Some voiced concerns about the apparent homogeneous nature of the board, the absence of a voting native Hawaiian representative and lack of Hawaiians participating at this particular meeting.

### **Selected Comments**

*Getting the community involved is hugely important. I don't just see the Tourism Authority as affecting only the hotels, restaurants, ecotourism. It affects everybody. People are so depressed. Some of our best people are moving to the mainland. The more we can do to energize the community, to encourage the community and create a positive atmosphere, I think it's going to help everybody.*

*Lee Harlow, President, Volcano House*

*We encourage the development of a master database to include all project participants, especially our kupuna volunteers, and community groups. Personal acknowledgement of their efforts and contributions is most important. This database is essential for networking and developing appropriate time-value products with community support systems. Too often our local resources are overlooked or undervalued, while an external entity takes credit and profits out of State. This has been a major drawback for special interest wholesalers, such as Abercrombie & Kent, Walton Travel, Sierra Club, who all wish to use local outfitters.*

*Barry Taniguchi, Hawaii Island Economic Development Board*

*The Institute is a public-private sector effort involving eight resort properties on the Kona and Kohala Coast, the County of Hawaii, University of Hawaii, Hawaii Community College. (Starting next year, we will) provide management and supervisory employees of the Asian-Pacific Basin hotels and related companies with on-the-job and classroom training in hotel services, language and cultural familiarization. The success of the program will help establish the Big Island as an internationally recognized hotel training and education center.*

*Al Inoue, Managing Director, Hawaii Resort Training Institute*

*My belief is that if we don't include the Hawaiians, the local people, in the tourism effort, then they have the ability to disrupt the tourism we have going. And it's not only altruistically our duty to include the less fortunate, particularly on the Big*

*Island, but also it's economically our duty to include these people. And we're not going to do it with high-end hotels and high-end tourism.*

*Doug Hopkins, Resident*

*What I commend here is the process. What you've done is turned the responsibility over to the community. The HTA is giving us the opportunity to think big on a business level and small on an aloha level in terms of nurturing what we have here. We're the keepers of this incredible garden, and if we assault it, we'll lose it. The success of Hawaiian EdVenture Program is based on the fact that it's embraced by the community. This may be turning into a big business, but its foundation is our individual resources, the small vendors, the canoe clubs around town, the kupuna. We keep getting calls from people who want to join in the effort. It's a community project.*

*Judith Fox-Goldstein, Director, Hawaiian EdVenture Program/ President, Destination Hilo*

*Communities in this state are more than ready to have a say in the kind of tourism they want to see in the future. I'm glad that the HTA is taking the time to solicit community input for the first time. This is the most inclusive you can get. We appreciate you folks coming to Hilo, especially Lanai and Molokai. They're often overlooked when we hold statewide meetings.*

*Millie Kim, Resident*

*The Hawaii Tourism Authority could be the starting point of a truly productive coalition between the people of Hawaii and the business community. However, good collaborations require trust and it's extremely hard for the people of Hawaii to trust an HTA that is composed only of key business leaders. We support the community's right to be an integral part of this planning process and to restructure the HTA so it's truly representative of Hawaiian culture, local communities, conservation concerns, small businesses and not just big business travel. It's a great opportunity for grassroots, cooperative community-based coalition.*

*Deborah Ward, Conservation Council of Hawaii*

**Product Development:** Many participants noted the diversity of tourism products on the island, from cultural sites to environmental attractions. Some pointed to a slow but steady re-education of the Japanese traveler in terms of cultural interest. However, there were concerns about overburdening ecotourism sites with heavy volumes of visitors. Judith Goldstein of Hawaiian EdVenture Program noted that her organization tries to address this by breaking up large tour groups into smaller ones and sending them to different sites. The majority of participants advocated building on the strengths of the island instead of transforming it in pursuit of increased visitor expenditures.

### ***Selected Comments***

*Our problem in East Hawaii is we have 800,000 – 900,000 visitors a year travelling through our community in individual cars looking for things to do. Our challenge is really to get them to stay longer. To expand on the activities that we have. Hawaii has a very historic landscape. And we do very little to tell that story to the passing tourist. If we teach ourselves and use the interpretive power of tourism to teach local people about the place they live in, local people become the best speaker of those stories. East Hawaii has a unique community fulfilling, community-building kind of tourism. Rightly developed, it would be very sustainable. I would encourage you to work on statistics so that we all understand from a business perspective better what tourism is for us.*

*Jeff Melrose, President, East Hawaii Chamber of Commerce*

*The agency provides support to nearly 100 accredited cultural and artistic organizations, over 2,500 registered artists and 10,000 artists and cultural practitioners statewide reaching a resident and visitor audience in the millions each year. Our bottom line is the abundance of rich cultural, historic and artistic tradition represents the true wealth of these islands.*

*Paula Helfrich, Big Island Commissioner, State Foundation on Culture and the Arts*

*I helped an architect develop Whalers' Village. It was a marvel, but they kept on building. Now it's a tourist trap. And tourists don't like it anymore. Last year, in one*

*of the top hotels in Kailua-Kona we had a \$65 Christmas dinner outdoors. It was junk. I could eat in Hilo for \$7 better than that. And tourists don't want to come back. We have to make it fun for them. We can't just take them upside down and shake their money out.*

*Albert Lederberger, Huuau O Ka'u*

*We see resources on the Big Island being spoiled. For example, we take our 14-passenger van to Thurston's Lava Tube quite frequently. We manage to make it there when nobody's there. It's pristine and beautiful. And when we're just about to go into the tube, the 56-passenger tour buses arrive, so we just load them back up and go somewhere else. It's not even worth trying to visit an eco-feature with 150 people sharing it with you.*

*Doug Hopkins*

*Over the past few months we've entertained visitors from Japan who are interested in having an intimate cultural experience. Recently they're starting to re-book, not for drive-by tours, but for five and six days on the Big Island. And this is remarkable. It's a re-education. They are still booking 200 and 400-person groups, and that's a challenge but we divide them into four groups and each will go in a different direction. We have to have six or eight groups in place to make it work, and to maintain this intimate cultural experience.*

*Judith Fox-Goldstein, Director, Hawaiian EdVenture Program/ President, Destination Hilo*

**Regulation and Investment Incentives:** The majority of participants in this meeting supported regulatory changes that would enable farmers, ranchers to have visitor stays and legalize bed and breakfasts. Some participants related their difficulties in pursuing necessary requirements to set up such facilities, a process that currently takes many years. Those who oppose regulations feared it would open the door to "Waikiki-ization" of agriculture and conservation lands.

## **Selected Comments**

*We have to coordinate our regulatory system to match the system that we want our tourism environment to grow in. Part of our problem now is our state land use laws were created in the early '60s, during a plantation economy. Right now, it doesn't even address some of the diversified agricultural questions that we have. So if we want to allow the agriculture industry to have home stays, farm stays, ranch stays, trail rides, visitors experiences that incorporate actual working experiences on the farm, we literally can't do it under our present regulatory system. Right now we go through a whole bunch of acrobatics where if you pay money in an urban district, in a commercial zone, then you can go sleep on a farm. We should avoid this so we can set definite rules and standards so that these types of activities can be promoted, developed and experienced by the people looking for them. We feel that by bringing tourism, agriculture and our natural resources together they will all become healthier. By renting a couple rooms on a farm, someone could have the necessary extra money to improve his operation, make himself a lot more resilient for times like this when you have a drop in your agriculture income. You may have another way of surviving.*

*Mayor Stephen Yamashiro*

*We started several years ago to try to get involved with ecotourism as another enterprise on the ranch. And we ran into all kinds of stumbling blocks. The process of getting into it is difficult. We just want to make a little bit of money, but not lose track of why we're there. We are just allowing some people who are interested to come and visit. We've done it for years with our friends. We don't want the tail to wag the dog. The ranch comes first. If ecotourism loses sight of the land use and the many various uses that the land has, it has a problem.*

*Gordon Cran, Kapapala Ranch*

*We've tried to do some ecotourism with horseback riding. Working with the park and the state and the county and insurance companies, we've spent about seven years trying to get the whole thing going. We've sunk maybe half a million dollars*

*into the whole process and it got to be such a logistical nightmare we just had to say, 'bag it.'*

*Lee Harlow, Volcano House*

*It's outrageous to use the smokescreen of niche tourism to advocate revision of the land use and other laws to permit development of new niche tourism products. By encouraging a flood of private capital and land for new capital investment in accommodations, attractions, etc. as well as opening and developing of private lands, Hawaii would take another giant step toward Waikiki-ization. We support bed and breakfasts and home-stay visitors in which visitors may choose to stay with local families or rural situations.*

*Deborah Ward, Conservation Council of Hawaii*

**Marketing:** Several participants noted the growing importance of the Internet in marketing to potential visitors, from sending pictures of Hawaii to providing better links to Hawaii visitor attractions. A number of attendees also warned against focusing on increasing visitor expenditures to the exclusion of budget travelers, who still make a significant economic impact. They pointed out that East Hawaii in particular offers the types of quality visitor-resident interactions that budget visitors seek. One participant noted a lack of Hawaii advertising in Europe, and his own successful attempts to invite overseas friends to the island. One participant advocated giving visitors a parting gift --- at the minimum, a thank-you card from the Governor representing the residents of Hawaii.

### ***Selected Comments***

*Europe has 650 million people and half of those are making more money on average than all of you here. In Zurich, I walk down the street and I don't see anything about Hawaii. I see Turkey, Thailand, Mexico. This is a place where we have to fish hard. I have brought a lot of people to Hawaii. Some have relatives who own airlines, some business people. They come every year during the holidays. Mauna Kea Galleries in Hilo puts out Hawaii pictures over the Internet. It's called hawaiianpictures.com. Every week you get an emailed picture from the*

*gallery free. I put that on the Internet for all my international friends, and several of them are coming: from Cleveland, Switzerland, Germany.*

*Albert Lederberger, Huuau O Kau*

*The Internet is being underplayed, from what I hear. I think that Go Hawaii, the HVCB website is extremely important. Google.com is Princeton University's rating system for websites. It tells you a percentage of how important a website is by how many other websites it's linked with. Some of our biggest hotels have some of the worst connected hotels in the world on the Internet. I just did a trip to New York and entirely arranged it on the Internet. Everything I needed to do I did on the Internet, not the New York Tourism Authority.*

*The Australians are telling us that the backpacker business is a billion and a half dollar industry in which the average guest stays four to six months and spends \$7,000 versus the Japanese tourist who comes for two weeks and spends \$3,000. So obviously there's some use in this type of tourism that's not being recognized. I think the Big Island can thrive as has Queenstown, New Zealand. Ten years ago, I'm told it looked like Hilo. Today it's one of the boom towns of New Zealand, based entirely on budget travel.*

*Doug Hopkins, Resident and Developer*

*I have been a small budget worldwide traveler for many years. My best experiences have been intimate, meeting people within the town itself. I also speak as an educator and as the mother of a young restaurateur in Hilo. Just speaking to tourists is so much more of a quality experience for them and for us as residents than going to a hotel. I encourage you to look at the small budget traveler as being a special person who wants more of a quality experience. And we can give it to them. Because this is the kind of island where people want to be, to have that experience.*

*Deborah Ward, Conservation Council of Hawaii*



**Infrastructure and Support Services:** Some participants noted that addressing the infrastructure needs of residents also benefits visitors. Similar to the West Hawaii meeting, the issue of inadequate or poorly maintained restrooms was discussed. As a type of support service, one participant advocated having more regularly staffed visitor booths to help guests feel welcome.

### ***Selected Comments***

*One thing we're lacking on this island, where the distances are so big, there are no restrooms for the public. In Europe, when I had prostate problems, the first thing I did was get the town plan and look for public restrooms. Because I couldn't go more than 20 minutes from one to the next. And there was. Even on the highest mountain you have a decent restroom.*

*Albert Lederberger, Huuau O Kau*

*We're finding an interesting convergence where both the tourist and the resident support similar values: safe streets, well-maintained public parks, clean restrooms. The HVCB's job is to market the state out of state. In-state involves our commitment to making sure the product is worth marketing. The HTA needs to be a lightning rod to push government CIP projects into tourism-related infrastructure development so we can all be a part of managing and maintaining our resources, historic sites and cultural events. Making improvements based on the criteria of what benefits the resident would benefit the visitor is the best kind of marketing Hawaii could have, because the result will be a good product.*

*Millie Kim, Resident*

*In New Zealand, in Canada, all over Europe, every single town has a visitor booth. There are people there to greet you most of the time. A lot of the time those people are young and enthusiastic and they'll say, 'I'll help you find accommodations. I'll make a phone call for you. Here's a map, or I'll draw you a map. You know there's a concert tonight? I can get you tickets or we have free tickets. That kind of friendliness makes such a difference to a tourist. It makes*

*them feel like they're supposed to be there. And they're welcome. So I think that restrooms and welcome places for visitors are very very important.*

*Deborah Ward, Conservation Council of Hawaii*